Improving top of the funnel for MPL's social live streaming product

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Context

The aim of this document is to chart out strategies for improving the top of the funnel activities, namely awareness and acquisition, for MPL's early stage social live streaming experience. MPL has grown incredibly well as a competitive gaming platform leveraging hyper casual games and has seen promising early results with its audio and a new video live streaming platform. These features are meant to improve overall retention for MPL, open up new avenues for monetisation and may possibly be rolled out as a separate product in future.

Understanding Live Streaming

Live streaming as a means of entertainment and as a path to internet fame has grown tremendously over the last decade.

- Live-streaming is as big a cultural phenomenon as it is a technological one.
- From early desktop based platforms like Justin.tv to livestreaming being a click away on social apps, the field has evolved a lot over the last 10 decades.
- Patterns on what works are still emerging. Today, live streams of people simply eating food, studying or even woodturning can amass an audience larger than traditional cable TV at times. Hence, it's imperative to understand why people stream, who consumes this content and what category of content works. From people live-streaming their entire day on a platform like Justin.tv with a camera attached on their head years ago to being able to stream your views on Instagram with a single click to attending live concerts within social games, live-streaming is as big a cultural phenomenon as it is a technological one.

Understanding Streamers

- Besides casual streaming on social apps, streaming as an activity requires serious commitment and strategic content planning.
- Streaming done by the majority of the top streamers requires a decent camera setup, mic, environment, apps like Streamlabs for multi-platform stream management and a plethora of other tools for audience engagement.
- Furthermore, given the maturity of this field, it can be hard to stand out if there is a lack of pre-existing fanbase for the creator

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Given the amount of efforts required, streaming as an activity is picked up by content creators for the following reason : -

Money - Streaming, if done well, can be a good earning source for a variety of people given a dedicated audience. Streamers can monetise their audience through branded partnerships, exclusive memberships & content, exclusive virtual items (stickers, emotes), donations or if the platform supports, by receiving virtual gifts bought with real money. Many people view streaming as full time jobs and a viable career option.

Fame & Social Validation - Building on the previous point, the fame that comes with live-streaming and building an audience, often motivates new content creators to try out the medium in search of social validation. In-fact, it takes a decent amount of time to build an audience that can be monetised, hence likes, views, conversations are often the early motivators for a lot of streamers.

General Interest & Community Building - Live-streaming allows communities passionate about a certain topic to come together, experience something together and interact in real time. As a result, there is a category of streamers who simply want to broadcast something to the world that interests them or brings a community together. A lot of niche content streamers may fall within this category (Ex - Knitting, Simracing). Intrinsically motivated, monetary rewards are secondary to them.

Live-streaming is inherently a social experience. Live-streaming is a medium for a community passionate about a certain topic to come together, experience something together and interact in real time. As a result, there is a category of

Understanding Content Consumption & Audience (move this up)

Live streaming content consumption is relatively less casual than other forms of content. Also, the demography of users changes based on the content category. (Ex - Sports works well with older adults while game streaming works better with a more younger audience base.). The categories are as mentioned below : -

1. **Gaming** - One of the most prominent categories in the field. Content can be further sub-categorised as Let's Plays, Walkthroughs & Tutorials, Speedruns, Competitive gaming and esports etc.

2. **Sports** - One of the oldest forms of live content. Sports events being live-streamed experience massive consumption and have a more general appeal.

3. **Live entertainment / Performing Arts** - Musician, artists, illustrators live-streaming their work. An overall growing category.

4. **Health & Fitness** - Not found traditionally on a lot of streaming platforms, however, live workout with fitness trainers is a high-growth category as well.

5. **Education** - Live classes or live coaching, especially for an audience preparing for competitive exams.

6. **Influencer & Lifestyle** - Home to the most diverse variety of content ranging from people studying, eating, just chatting with people, crafting, discussions etc. Furthermore, semi-erotic/suggestive content would come under this category where a large male audience turns up for interacting with female content creators. Extremely prominent in Indian and other Asian markets.

7. **Non-recurring audience categories** - Live-streaming of announcements, interviews , events etc are some content categories that might see huge numbers but have more of one off audience.

Goals/Metrics to Track

The success of ideas discussed below can be measured using a variety of metrics like CPA, Installs, Page/Screen Views, Video views, Minutes of content consumed, Activations, ASO rankings and surveys.

Ideas for improving top of the funnel

Based on the understanding of the medium and the audience, the strategies and action items listed below can be implemented for improving the awareness and acquisition for MPL's live streaming products that have been further broken down into subcategories..

MPL Specific Techniques

Improving awareness and acquisition among consumers

1. **Replacing tokens with 30 sec previews of streams for free games** - The free battles on the platform currently utilise tokens. Instead of tokens, the users can have the option to watch 30 seconds of a livestream clip to play the battle simultaneously being exposed to the platform. Similarly, the paid battles/tournament entries can be discounted if users consume some amount of live streaming content. This can be an effective method for building awareness among the existing users.

2. **Reality Show** - Given the competitive nature of the MPL audience, a reality show leveraging the well established gamification loops within the app can be implemented as well. Ex - A gamified India's Got Talent style show where people showcase/live-stream their talent and move up the leaderboard based on engagement. Tie-ups with traditional TV channels for broadcasting can be done as well to add more gravity to the contest.

3. **Snippets (Better Discoverability)** - One of the biggest challenges within the streaming sector is discoverability. Less than 15% people say that they are able to find relevant streams (source - PWC) . Hence content discovery provides a great improvement opportunity from a product standpoint.

Randomly scrolling through streams isn't effective given you might be joining a stream too early where the creator is still inactive and waiting for the audience, while joining a content mid-stream may lead to disengagement given the lack of context about the overall stream. This is why curating and highlighting engaging moments from a stream becomes critical.

In the game live-streaming community, there are ML based tools that pick up the best parts of an esports match or a fight to create marketable content from larger videos. On social networks, funny snippets from comedy series/movies/action scenes from regional or international cinema often go viral.

Hence, curated moments from a stream can be used both within the app and on social channels to pull in the audience. These snippets are more effective at providing a flavor of the content to prospective users than random scroling. This curation can be done manually or be automated with ML. Ex - Identifying moments within a stream with highest engagement (comments, likes) and automatically creating snippets out of those moments.

4. **Video previews on homepage** - Assuming the MPL app homepage has the highest traffic among all the screens on the app, the same can be utilised for bringing in traffic to this division. Ex - A horizontal scroll of auto playing videos of content creators currently live or snippets from past streams can bring in traffic to the platform. Currently there are cards on the homepage, however, autoplaying video can work better (Would need to be tested).

5. **Matchmaking Screen** - Snippets from the live streamed content can be showcased on the matchmaking screen where users inherently need to wait. The same can be done on the results screen. However, network considerations should be taken into account for the implementation of such features.

6. **Incentivised Usage** - Both creators and consumers can be incentivised for engaging with the platform (Ex - Mega bonus on first stream, bonus on watching 10 minutes of content, bonus on watching X amount of content in Y category, bonus on referring users to a stream). These incentives can be broken down as gamified goals within the app as well.

Furthermore, assuming that the wallet section in the app brings in a considerable amount of traffic, a virtual wallet can be implemented within the app. The virtual wallet can be semi-transparent in terms of design exhibiting possible earnings that can take place once certain activities are completed.

This utilises endowment effect where even if people don't already have the money, once they see the prospective amount in their own account, they are more likely to complete those incentivised tasks to not lose that money.

7. **Exclusive esports tie-ins** - Sports brings in a massive amount of audience, however, the rights to such content can be expensive. E-sports is rising as a medium and acquiring exclusive streaming rights for e-sport championships can bring in a dedicated set of audience.

Improving awareness and acquisition among content creators

1. **Earnings calculator** - MPL has a category of users that engage with the platform to make money. A subset of those can be decent content creators as well. A small tool for the players with the biggest following can be created that allows them to see their potential earnings given they choose to live-stream

 Ex - Input your number of followers (say, 50,000)
Average expected audience per stream (10% of 50,000) x Number of streams in a month (say 24).

24 * 5000 = 1,20,000 views/month
Average earning per 1000 views - > 100 INR
Total -> 1,20,000 / 100 = 12,000 INR/month.

2. **SOP for content creation/ Seeding Content / better filters and tools** - A content platform cannot work without great content. Great content itself can act as a vehicle for awareness and adoption for the platform. Sometimes, users just need to be guided in the right direction in terms of content creation. Creating tutorials, best practises, do 's and don't can enable creators to create good content and avoid the troubles that usually come with UGC. Seeding content that acts as a benchmark of what can be created works as well. Seeding content also becomes important given the fact that on an average, people give up on a stream within 90 seconds if it's not engaging. A series of such engagements can disinterest the user in the live-streaming platform overall. Furthermore, empowering creators with better tools, ex - stickers/filters, sfx during the live-stream can help in creation of engaging content as well.

3. **Memoji Style Integration** - A lot of people wanting to stream may not be comfortable showing faces. A Memoji style integration where users can create virtual animated avatars would enable a lot more people to come on the platform and create content. This can be a good addition to audio channels where the virtual avatars bring in a visual appeal while content creators just need to provide audio.

4. **One-click exports** - A lot of streaming is still desktop based. Allowing users who are streaming on other platforms to simultaneously stream on MPL with a chrome extension could bring a lot of good content on the platform, especially by creators who have been creating live content since a considerable amount of time.

Ideas from growing a content startup from 0 to 500,000 users.

At Brevity, I had the opportunity to grow a content startup from 0 to 500K MAUs. The following tips are unique to that experience and can be implemented for the growth of the live-streaming platform.

Partnerships - It can be hard to grow a walled platform. At Brevity, the content was distributed across several news, rss apps and aggregators that helped the platform grow. Similarly, allowing users to easily share the content across platforms with watermark can help in creating awareness about the platform (Ex- Tiktok).. Close to 60% of users on Brevity were acquired this way.

Treating each content category as a product - Each content category at Brevity was treated as a separate product translating into a different AARRR funnel for each of them. Traffic acquisition for the Relationships and Health categories depended more on social channels while aggregators and email subscribers brought in traffic to Technology and Business categories. With this philosophy, we also created category based separate channels, bots and groups on platforms like Telegram. This helped us in amassing 60K dedicated subscribers to whom we could reach directly on text.

Listicle like content to promote content - Used by some asian OTT platforms, pieces of content can be compiled together as a listicle that works better on social platforms. Ex - A listicle titled "5 PUBG kills you need to see '' compiled from different streams or "5 song covers that are better than the original '' works better in terms of showcasing a platform's content versus individually promoting content. Each content piece can be supplemented with a CTA beneath it that links directly to the platform, say, "See More" or "Follow Creator" buttons that are linked directly to the platform.

Content timeliness - Notifying users about relevant content based on the timing of the day can bring in phenomenal results. Ex - Pushing health oriented content in morning vs pushing relationships oriented content at night can lead to more engagement. The editorial calendar needs to be in sync with the same.

Hygiene Techniques

1. **ASO** - Currently, MPL doesn't rank on the App Store for terms like 'live streaming apps' or doesn't show up in the relevant apps/similar apps section for competing apps. This may be slightly difficult on Android given MPL is side—loaded. However on App Store, live streaming related keywords can be added to the description, name, reviews etc.. If the live-streaming section is launched as a separate app, then ASO strategies can be implemented as well. Channels - App Store, Play Store

2. **Traditional Marketing** - MPL is among the few startups in India with traditional media presence (TV, Print campaigns). The same can be replicated and leveraged for the live streaming division. Channels - TV, OOH, Print.

3. **Digital Marketing / Paid campaigns** - Paid Ads representative of the content on the platform can be run on social channels, OTT platforms and Ad networks. Great for tracking CACs and optimizations. Furthermore, exploring content tie-ups with viral web-series creators, say TVF, where the product plays a critical role in the narrative can bring a lot of awareness to the app. Channels - Social networks, OTT.

4. **Influencer Marketing / Celebrity Tie-ins / Exclusive Tie-ins** - Tie up with influencers across categories (music, comedians, gamers, youtubers, celebrities). Exclusive tie-ins can be looked into as well (Ex - Live streaming by a certain creator exclusively on MPL). This strategy can bring in a lot of new people to the platform and should help in building a repository of good content.

Prioritisation

To ensure bias-free prioritization of ideas, I utilised the RICE framework for prioritization with some educated assumptions in place.

RICE Framework - The RICE scoring model is a prioritization framework designed to help product managers determine which products, features, and other initiatives to put on their roadmaps by scoring these items according to four factors. These factors, which form the acronym RICE, are reach, impact, confidence, and effort.

Formula - (R+I+C)/E

Scoring of Ideas based on RICE Framework (Consumer specific ideas only)

Idea	Reach	Impact	Confidence	Effort	Score
Stream Preview for free battles	4	4	5	2	6.5
Video Previews on Home-page	5	4	3	2	6
Competitive Reality Show	4	4	4	2	6
Incentivised Usage	4	4	5	3	4.33
Exclusive Esports Tie-ins	3	2	3	2	4
Curated Content snippets	4	4	4	3	4
Video Previews on Matchmaking Screens	4	4	2	3	3.33

Summary

In summary, we looked at live-streaming as medium, analysed the user base, looked at various categories, identified certain needs and ideas for growing MPL's live-streaming platform followed by prioritisation of those ideas.

Overall live-streaming is a growing category yet to be tapped in the Indian market. With an existing user base of millions, MPL can translate a lot of its existing users as consumers of live-streaming content to get a headstart and open up new avenues for growth and revenues.